L&S

Analysis of the Conceptual, Comparative, and Functional Aspects of "Prospect 2" on the Basis of Cisar's (2000) Checklist

Maede Esfandiari

Department of English Language, Sari Branch, Islamic Azad University, Sari, Iran

Corresponding email address
maede.esfandiari94@gmail.com

Abstract: Textbooks play an important role in language classrooms in all educational institutions, schools, colleges, language institutes all over the world. They are a kind of support for both teachers and learners and give them a kind of consistency. Each country uses certain textbooks for the process of foreign language learning. In Iran, Prospect 2 has been recently presented for language learning in the school context. Most studies have evaluated the communicative aspect of such textbook and few studies have investigated the functional and comparative aspects of the textbooks as well as their expansion of concepts. Hence, this study made an attempt to evaluate the new textbook used in Iranian junior high school named Prospect 2 which was introduced by the Iranian ministry of education in 2013. The Cisar's checklist was used to indicate the advantages and disadvantages of the textbook in three aspects of functional, comparative and expansion of concepts. The study sample included 10 teachers in the city of Neka. The questionnaire consisted of10 items in Likert-scale on three categories including connectivity (expansion of concepts), comparative and functional aspects. Descriptive methods were used to analyze the data by SPSS software. The results of the analysis showed that teachers had a positive view towards the expansion of concepts and the comparative aspect in the textbook. However, teachers had a negative view towards the functional aspect of Prospect 2. Results of the study had implications for policy makers, material developers, language teachers and EFL learners.

Key words: Analysis, development, EFL learners, evaluation, ELT textbook.

1. Introduction

Textbooks are a core part of any curriculum, and they are crucial to the teacher so one might assume they are researched, written, and published as unique contributions to advancing knowledge (Zohrabi, Sabouri, & Behroozian, 2012). According to what Razmjoo (2007) said, many students working with a textbook feel secure and have a sense of progress and achievement. Actually, when a book is nearly developed for an ELT context, its evaluation is even of more importance because its pedagogical value needs to be determined before long-term use. In Iran many researchers have conducted studies on textbook evaluation in the contexts of high schools and guidance schools to find out why teachers and students are not satisfied with their EFL textbook. Where is the problem? It depends on many factors, one is text book. It seems that Iranian EFL textbooks are not designed according to the learners' needs or interests.

According to Hamidi, Bagheri, Sarinavaee, and Seyyedpour (2016), as textbooks are important in learning; their quality should be taken into account. Since no textbook can be qualified, therefore textbook evaluation is used to find out its suitability. Due to the significance of textbook evaluation in the field of ELT, the researcher qualitatively analyzed the eighth grade English textbook at school which is named Prospect 2. Richards (2007) maintains that materials provide the students with the main information and the type of the language practice that occurs in the classroom. Dudley-Evans and St. John (2000) suggest four primary functions of using materials in the classroom: as a source of language, as a learning support, as a motivation and stimulation, and as a reference. Richards and Renandya (2002) offer that the main aim of materi-

als is to present and practice content, ease interaction between students, and promote learner autonomy. Hence, the present study aims to first through the introduction of new book and also by the presentation of the most important approaches in the area of providing and developing this book and their evaluation, to examine Prospect 2 developed for 8th grade students from Cisar (2000) materials evaluation checklist angles. It is hoped that the results of this research to be useful for education administrators, curriculum designers, planners and authors of educational content and help them have a better view about revising and republishing this textbook. In addition, this study serves as a guide to help teachers have a better and deeper understanding of the textbook and to overcome the problems by careful planning and time management.

Thus, the following research questions based on Cisar (2000) checklist were formulated for further analysis:
1. To what extent does the Prospect 2 book focus on the expansion of concept aspect of language learning?
2. To what extent does the Prospect 2 book focus on the comparative aspect of language learning?
3. To what extent does the Prospect 2 book pay attention to the functional aspect of language learning?

2. Review Literature

2.1 Materials Evaluation

As Tomlinson (2006) states, no textbook is perfect, since it can be used by different students in different circumstances. In evaluating a textbook, we need to know how it meets learners' needs. Evaluation might vary from one context to another based on the aims, wants, and abilities of the evaluators. Assessment of textbooks is a profitable way of teacher development and gives beneficial perception to the teachers. The first of three which are related to the collection of information concern factors which deal with students' background, learning processes, and instructional factors. The second component is the interpretation of the information and comparing it with some desired state of affairs, goals, or other information that you think is relevant to your decisions. And the last one is the decision-making process about instruction, students, text books, etc (Becerra, 2006).This fact can be identified through textbook evaluation and students' feedback. Such information is useful in predicting the appropriateness of the pre-determined purposes, of the course as well. Hence, evaluation can provide a basis for textbooks revision. Wong(2011) states that the main motives for creating or improving provisions for evaluation are three main concerns: to officially modulate requested ranks of quality of educational results and stipulations; to keep educational service suppliers obligated and to uphold continuous encouragement in education.

When a textbook is introduced, it has to be inspected cautiously in order to ensure that the material is appropriate for the learners. So, a number of distinct aspects should be taken into consideration, for instance, the age and expertise degree of the students, the different language elements which the students need to learn, the course syllabus and so on (Fredriksson & Olsson, 2006).

2.2 Textbook in Language Learning

Tomlinson (2003) believes that "A textbook helps provide a route map for both teachers and learners, making it possible for them to look ahead to what will be done in a lesson as well as to look back on what has been done".

Barzegar (2013) suggested that textbooks play a very crucial role in the realm of language teaching and learning. He echoes Davison's (1975) statement that "the next important factor in the second/foreign language classroom after the teacher is a textbook".

According to Richards and Renandya (2002), textbooks include some disadvantages such as inability to introduce suitable language models, making cultural misunderstanding and so on. Based on Zohrabi (2011), materials, especially course books, need to be evaluated at every stage of the course in order to find their weaknesses and improve them. As stated by Zohrabi, Sabouri, and Kheradmand (2014), textbooks are one of the elements that may promote or discourage learners depending on their materials. They are a kind of support for both teachers and learners. Textbooks provide students a kind of consistency. Textbook design and evaluation, based on Sardabi and Koosha (2016), has recently turned into a very important area in English Language Teaching.

2.3 Empirical Research

Several researchers have been conducted to investigate textbook evaluation. For instance, Jahangard (2007) evaluated four EFL textbooks that have been used in the Iranian high schools by the Ministry of Education. He discussed the merits and demerits of the textbooks with reference to 13 common criteria extracted from different materials evaluation checklists. The criteria were as follows: explicitness of objectives, good vocabulary explanation and practice, educationally and socially acceptable approaches to the target community, periodic review and test sections, clear attractive layout, print easy to read, appropriate visual materials, interesting topics and tasks, clear instructions, clearly organized and graded content, plenty of authentic language, good grammar presentation and practice, fluency practice in all four skills, and independent

learning situations. Sabzalipour and Mousavi (2013) have conducted. The purpose of this study was to evaluate English language textbook currently taught at Iranian first grade high school from the students' perspective. For this purpose, a 40 items questionnaire based on eight criteria namely content, physical appearance, exercises and activities, clarity of instructions, level of textbook, vocabulary, grammar, and consideration of learning style differences in the textbook were developed. This study was conducted at four high schools in Tonekabon in Mazandaran Province. A total of 273 students participated in the study. The subjects were all female with the same age. The researcher investigated the students' attitude toward this textbook to see whether they have positive or negative attitude toward them. A study done by Kia-Ahmadi and Arabmofrad (2015), in which 1st-grade junior high school text book was analyzed. The present study was done at Gorgan University aimed to explore the level of Gardner's (1993) multiple intelligences theory in the 1st- grade junior high school textbook "Prospect 1". To this end, 135 Iranian learners of 1st-grade junior high schools were assigned from public, private, and gifted schools in three different cities in Iran. Ahmadi and Derakhshan (2015) evaluated the Iranian junior high school new textbook "Prospect" and its old version Right Path to English1 (RPE1) in order to find out to what extent these textbooks are based on communicative purposes based on teachers' perceptions. 100 male and female English junior high school teachers ranging from 2 to 30 years of teaching experience took part in the study.

Kamyabi Gol and Baghaeeyan (2015) by considering the crucial role of textbooks in ELT program aimed to investigate that to what extent Prospect 1 has the characteristics of a CLT syllabus, and what the strengths and weaknesses of Prospect 1 are. This study was done in Mashhad. To this end, the textbook was scrutinized with reference to Cunningsworth's (1995) checklist. Akbari and Pourabbas (2015) in their article sought to investigate second-grade English text book widely applied to Iranian high school students. In the beginning, a questionnaire prepared on the students' language needs and wants was distributed among 120 second-grade male high school students and then the researchers utilized the results of this investigation as the premise to survey the intended text book. The obtained results indicated that although all language abilities and elements were approximately significant for most of the learners, the text book couldn't satisfy the students' foreign language needs. .Arabloo (2015) evaluated and analyzed the teachers' points of view toward the newly developed Iranian junior high school English textbook "Prospect 2". For this purpose, eighteen male and female teachers teaching junior high school (grade eight) from some cities in Iran, namely, Tehran, Urmia, Chaldoran, Khoy, Sanandaj and Tabriz were asked one interview question. The researcher recorded their voices while talking by a voice recorder and then listened and summarized the answers and perceptions toward the book.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The sample of the study includes 10 EFL teachers who were asked to fill out a checklist containing 10 questions. Their ages ranged from 25 to 42 years old and majored in English language teaching both at the BA and MA levels. The participants'gender consisted of both male and female teachers from different schools in the city of Neka. They were selected through convenience sampling. They had teaching experiences from 3 to 20 years.

3.2 Instruments and materials

Cisar's (2000) Checklist

In order to study language teaching books and collecting views, Cisar's checklist (2000) was designed regarding the content of these books according to the American Council of teaching foreign languages known as the American Council on Teaching of Foreign languages. The eighth grade English language textbook, i.e., Prospect 2 which is commonly used for schools in Iran was evaluated based on the textbook evaluation checklist developed by Cisar (2000). The checklist which consists of five items and is based on five-choice formats and is Likert scale and its options are answered on a range of phrases "very low to very high". Number 1 shows very low, 2 shows low, 3 shows average, 4 shows high and 5 shows very high.

This checklist includes five aspects (communicative),(cultural), (expansion of concepts), (comparative) and (functional). The last three aspects were used in this study. The third aspect in Cisar's checklist focuses on the extent of ability of an educational book to develop the course content and the language learned and is called "expansion of concepts". The comparative aspect studies the strength of the book in making linguistic and cultural comparisons between the first and second language. The last aspect examined in this checklist was the "functional" which indicated to what extent an educational book encourages the learners to the use of language learned in out of class and real life.

The material for this study wad the English language textbook taught in Iranian junior high school (grade eight). This book was the newly edited version of English textbook for 2nd- grade junior high school students in Iran. Authors of this book were Khadir, Khairabadi, Alavi Moghaddam, Foroozandeh Shahraki and Nikupour. It is the most recently compiled

textbook published in 2013.

3.3 Procedure and data analysis

To evaluate the quality of Prospect 2, the Cisar (2000) checklist was used. 10 teachers were selected through conven-ience sampling including both male and female teachers. After selecting the teachers, they were asked to express their atti-tudes towards the aspects of the textbook. After collecting the data, items were analyzed descriptively and qualitatively based on the Cisar checklist focusing on the expansion of concepts and comparative and functional aspects of Prospect 2 through SPSS version 21.

4. Results and data analysis

4.1 Reliability Analysis of the Questionnaire
Before presenting the descriptive statistics of the questionnaire items, the reliability result of the instrument which was checked in a pilot studyhas been shown.

Table 4.1
The Result of the Reliability Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha	Participants (total)	N of Items
.879	10	10

As Table 4.1, the Cronbach's Alpha reliability of the Cisar's (2000) checklist with 10 items and 10 participants was found to be .879 which shows a high reliability index.

4.2 Teachers' Responses on the Items of the Checklist
The item total statistics for each item of the checklist answered by the teachers along with its Cronbach's alpha relia-bility can be found in the following table.

Table 4.2
The Item Total Statistics for Each Item of the Checklist Answered by the Teachers

	Scale Mean if Item De-leted	Scale Variance if Item De-leted	Corrected Item-Total Correla-tion	Cronbach's Alpha if Item De-leted
exp1	83.90	148.322	.493	.894
exp2	83.80	151.956	.254	.899
exp3	84.80	135.733	.768	.886
exp4	84.10	131.211	.870	.883
compare1	84.10	140.100	.465	.896
compare2	83.80	133.289	.867	.883
func1	84.00	132.000	.858	.883
func2	85.10	143.211	.529	.893
func3	84.60	139.600	.628	.890
func4	85.50	163.167	-.242	.911

Table 4.2 above shows that all the items (the column for Cronbach's alpha if item deleted) contributed a high reliabil-ity index (above .88) to the questionnaire. The items of the checklist were in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low to very high. Number 1 shows very low, 2 shows low, 3 shows average, 4 shows high and 5 shows very high.

4.3 Answering the First Research Question
3. To what extent does the Prospect 2 book focus on the expansion of concepts of language learning?

The next table shows the descriptive statistics of the checklist items including mean and standard deviation related to the expansion of concepts. It should be mentioned that since we have 5 options, any score below 3 would be considered a negative score and any score above 3 would be considered a positive score.

Table 4.3
The Descriptive Statistics of the Checklist Items Related to the expansion of concepts

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Status
exp1	10	3.90	.738	Positive
exp2	10	4.00	.816	Positive
exp3	10	3.00	1.155	Positive
exp4	10	3.70	1.252	Positive
Valid N (listwise)	10			

The expansion of concepts had 4 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). As it can be seen in Table 4.5, all the 4 items received mean scores above 3 which show the positive view of the teachers towards the expansion of concepts of *Prospect 2*. Item 2 "Are students given the opportunity to use past personal experiences and prior knowledge" received the highest score (4.00) and item 3 "Do students have enough time to participate in projects that use technology, individual interviews, printed publications (such as newspapers and magazines), visual media (such as television, video and advertising), or print sources (such as dictionaries and encyclopedias) to get information?" received the lowest score (3.00).

4.4 Answering the Second Research Question
4. To what extent does the Prospect 2 book focus on the comparative aspect of language learning?
The following table shows the descriptive statistics of the checklist items including mean and standard deviation related to the comparative aspect. It should be mentioned that since we have 5 options, any score below 3 would be considered a negative score and any score above 3 would be considered a positive score.

Table 4.4
The Descriptive Statistics of the ChecklistItems Related to the comparativeAspect

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Status
compare1	10	3.70	1.418	Positive
compare2	10	4.00	1.155	positive
Valid N (listwise)	10			

The comparative aspect had 2 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). As it can be seen in Table 4.4, both items received mean scores above 3 which show the positive view of the teachers towards the comparative aspect of *Prospect 2*. Item 2 "Does the book content allow students to demonstrate their understanding of the similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the target language?" received the highest score (4.00) and item 1 "Does the book content raise discussions and activities in the form of glossary, word-of-mouths, and terminology in the form of source and target language?" received the lowest score (3.70).

4.5 Answering the Third Research Question
5. To what extent does the Prospect 2 book pay attention to the functional aspect of language learning?
The following table shows the descriptive statistics of the checklist items including mean and standard deviation related to the functional aspect. It should be mentioned that since we have 5 options, any score below 3 would be considered a negative score and any score above 3 would be considered a positive score.

Table 4.5
The Descriptive Statistics of the Checklist Items Related to the Functional Aspect

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Status
func1	10	3.80	1.229	Positive
func2	10	2.70	1.059	Negative
func3	10	3.20	1.135	Positive
func4	10	2.30	1.059	Negative
Valid N (listwise)	10			

The functional aspect had 4 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). As it can be

seen in Table 4.5, 2 items (1 and 3)received mean scores above 3 which show the positive view of the teachers towards the functional aspect of *Prospect 2*, while 2 items (2 and 4) received mean scores below 3 which show the negative view of the teachers towards the functional aspect of *Prospect 2*. Item 1 "Are students asked to communicate with foreign language speakers outside the classroom (in conversation, writing, execution, or presentation)?" received the highest score (3.80) and item 4 "Are students encouraged to use language in recreational activities (such as media activities, sports, games, travel, music, reading, etc.) and have enough opportunity?" received the lowest score (2.30).

5. Discussion and conclusion

The first question of the study investigated the extent the Prospect 2 book focus on the expansion of concepts of language learning. The expansion of concepts had 4 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). Based on the result, all the 4 items received mean scores above 3 which showed the positive view of the teachers towards the expansion of concepts of Prospect 2.

The second question of the study investigated the extent the Prospect 2 book focused on the comparative aspect of language learning. The comparative aspect had 2 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). Based on the result, both items received mean scores above 3 which show the positive view of the teachers towards the comparative aspect of Prospect 2.

The third question of the study investigated the extent the Prospect 2 book focused on the functional aspect of language learning. The functional aspect had 4 items in a Likert-scale format ranging from very low (1) to very high (5). Based on the result, 2 items (1 and 3)received mean scores above 3 which show the positive view of the teachers towards the functional aspect of Prospect 2, while 2 items (2 and 4) received mean scores below 3 which show the negative view of the teachers towards the functional aspect of Prospect 2.

The results of this study were congruent or not congruent with the general findings of previous studies conducted on "Prospect 2" textbook or similar books. For example, the findings of our study were not in line with Kia-Ahmadi and Arabmofrad(2015) who compared the new edition of English text book Prospect 1 with the previous Right Path to English 2 based on students' perceptions. The participants of the study consist of two groups of students; 165 first grade junior high school students and 135 second grade junior high school students in three different cities of Iran. The results revealed that the activities in the two textbooks mainly cater two intelligences: verbal/ linguistic which was the most predominant intelligence in both textbooks followed by visual spatial. However, naturalistic, musical and logical intelligence were found as less common intelligences.

Also, Akbari and Pourabbas (2015) investigated second-grade English text book widely applied to Iranian high school students. A questionnaire prepared on the students' language needs and wants was distributed among 120 second-grade male high school students and then the researchers utilized the results of this investigation as the premise to survey the intended text book. The obtained results indicated that although all language abilities and elements were approximately significant for most of the learners, the text book couldn't satisfy the students' foreign language needs. Similarly, Papi (2015) evaluated the English course book used in 7th grade of high school in Iran, titled (Prospect1), in terms of task types. Finch (1999) task type checklist was used as a reliable instrument. The findings showed that static / one-way tasks occurred more frequently than dynamic / two-way tasks. Furthermore, the frequency of shared tasks was more than other task types.

In addition, our findings were not supported by Maleki, Mollaee, and Khosravi(2014) who evaluated the Iranian pre-university ELT textbook. four research questions were posed to determine whether the language used in the pre-university English textbook is authentic, whether the conversations, grammar rules, vocabulary words and expressions presented in this book are used in real-life situations, whether the activities and exercises included in the book are appropriate for communicative learning, and whether the texts, examples, and illustrations of this book are variable enough. The results showed that the participants were not mostly satisfied about this English textbook.

Such processes would imply a comprehensive understanding of the educational priorities for the particular level of learners, which would then inform the internal structure of courseware, and a concomitant training of all teachers who would be using these course books along these lines.

The findings of the present study have the following pedagogical implications for teachers, learners, policy makers, and material developers:

The production of ELT materials should aim to meet the demands of the curriculum while, at the same time, being based on sound theorizing and published research in the domain of teaching learners. It is important that these concerns are shared by policy makers, courseware authors and critical readers of the materials alike, so that the materials are properly aligned and any possible untested theories held minimized. Also, Material developers can provide English teachers with a teacher textbook of Prospect 2 to present better teaching strategies for communicative language teaching.

References

Ahmadi, A., & Derakhshan, A. (2015). An evaluation of the Iranian junior high school English textbooks "Prospect 1" and its old version "Right Path to English 1" from teachers' perceptions. *International Journal of English Language and Literature Studies*, *4*(1), 37-48.

Akbari, O., &Pourabbas, H. (2015). Evaluation of Iranian second-grade high school English textbook based on needs analysis approach. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and Language Research, 2*(5), 19-34.

Arabloo, P. (2015). The Iranian Junior High School English text book "prospect 2" from the teacher's point of view. *International Journal of Language Learning and Applied Linguistics World, 9* (1), 85-91.

Barzegar, K. (2013).Development, validation, and justification of a comprehensive textbook evaluation model. *Journal of Educational Research, Reviews and Essays, 1*, 1-12

Becerra, N. (2006). The relationship between the primary teachers' teaching strategies and their strengths in multiple intelligences. *Procardia Social and Behavioral Sciences, 1,* 708-712.

Dudley-Evans, T., & St John, M. J. (2000).*Developments in English for specific purposes*. Cambridge: CUP.

Fredriksson, C., & Olsson, R. (2006). *English textbook evaluation. An investigation into criteria for selecting English textbooks.*

Hamidi, H., Bagheri, M., Sarinavaee, M., & Seyyedpour, A. (2016).Evaluation of two general English textbooks: New Interchange 2 vs. Four Corners 3.*Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *7*(2), 345- 351.doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0702.13.

Jahangard, A. (2007). Evaluating of EFL materials taught at Iranian public high schools. *The Asian EFL Journal.*

KamyabiGol, A., &Baghaeeyan, J. (2015). Critical analysis and teachers' perspectives on Prospect one (Iranian junior high school English book). *International Journal of Language and Applied Linguistics*, *1*(4), 14-25.

Kia-Ahmadi, E., &Arabmofrad, A. (2015).An evaluation study on the 1st-grade junior high schools' English textbook in the light of multiple intelligence theory.*World Journal of English Language*, *5*(1), 23-31. doi:10.5430/wjel.v5n1p23.

Maleki, A., Mollaee, F., &Khosravi, R.(2014). A content evaluation of Iranian pre-university ELT textbook. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies, 4*(5), 995-1000.

Razmjoo, S. A. (2007). High schools or private institutes' textbooks? Which fulfill communicative language teaching principles in the Iranian context? *Asian EFL Journal, 9*(4), 126-140.

Richards, J. C. (2007). *Curriculum development in language teaching*. New York: Longman.

Richards, J. C., &Renandya, W. A. (2002).*Methodology in language teaching: An anthology of current practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Sabzalipour, B., & Mousavi, Y. (2013). The evaluation of Iranian high school English textbook from the prospective of students. *Journal of Basic and Applied Scientific Research, 3*(8), 481-484.

Sardabi, N., & Koosha, M. (2016). New perspective in prospect: An assessment of strengths and weaknesses of Iranian sec ond year junior high school English textbooks. *Iranian Journal of Research in English Language Teaching, 3* (2), 57-70.

Sarem, S. N., Hamidi, H., & Mahmoudie, R. (2013). A critical look at textbook evaluation: A case study of evaluating an ESP course-book: English for international tourism. *International Research Journal of Applied and Basic Sciences*, *4*(2), 372-380.

Tomlinson, B. (2003) *Developing Materials for Language Teaching*. London: Continuum.

Tomlinson, B. (2006). Localizing the global: Matching materials to the context of learning. In J. Mukundan (Ed.), *Readings on ELT materials II* (pp. 1-16). Malaysia: Pearson Longman.

Wong, L.W. (2011). *Textbook evaluation: A framework for evaluating the fitness of Hong Kong NSS syllabus.* Retrieved from: http://asian-efl-journal.com/Thesis/Thesis-Wong.pdf

Zohrabi, M. (2011). Course book development and evaluation for English for general purposes course. *English Language Teaching*, *4*(2), 213-222. doi.org/10.5539/elt.v4n2p213.

Zohrabi, M., Sabouri, H., & Behroozian, R. (2012).An evaluation of merits and demerits of Iranian first year high school English textbook.*English Language Teaching*, *5* (8), 14-22. doi:10.5539/elt.v5n8p14.

Zohrabi, M., Sabouri, H., & Kheradmand, M. (2014).Comparative study of Interchange1 and English book1 of Iranian high schools. *Education International Journal of English, 3*(2), 95-104.